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Towards a Practical Criticism of Caesar's Prose Style

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W. Jackson Bate in his biography of Samuel Johnson observes:¹

Yet such is the control of semantics over the mind that when words (above all abstract labels) are learned early in life, the associations acquired with them at that time seem almost permanently "imprinted," except for a small number of people who in each generation try to enlarge or correct them.

So it is with labels applied to literary figures and their styles. So it is with Caesar.

The received opinion regarding the style of Caesar is uncomplicated and broadly apprehended. It goes back to Cicero:

[commentarios] . . . nudi enim sunt, recti et venusti, omni ornatu orationis tamquam veste detracta. sed dum voluit alios habere parata, unde sumerent qui vellent scribere historiam, ineptis gratum fortasse fecit, qui illa volent calamistris inurere: sanos quidem homines a scribendo deterruit; nihil est enim in historia pura et inlustri brevitae dulcius. (Cic. *Brutus* 262)

Caesar is said to have written a pure Latin, simple and direct. He exercised a strict economy in the use of a vocabulary limited to the plain diction of educated Romans. As a plain stylist, he avoided obtrusive ornamentation which, if used in excess, might smack of Asianism. He had studied, after all, with the same Molon of Rhodes

¹ W. Jackson Bate, *Samuel Johnson* (Cambridge 1977), p. 191.—The Latin is quoted throughout from O. Seel's Teubner edition of the *B.G.* (Stuttgart 1961).

whom Cicero credits with having chastened his own style.² Both in his Commentaries and in his oratory — which is described as forceful, vivid, and direct³ — the virtues of Caesar's style are achieved through the self-effacing ornament of *sermonis elegantia*, that is, the perfect choice of the right word and expression.⁴ The sources of this judgment, Cicero and Hirtius,⁵ seem unimpeachable; from them derives the almost universally held view that the Commentaries of Caesar are the straightforwardly lucid and objectively-told accounts of the *res gestae* of their author.

In the past century, however, a certain amount of discussion has been devoted to various questions that ultimately relate to composition and style. Historians, especially, have raised the reasonable suspicion that behind the specious objectivity and straightforwardness of the Commentaries lies calculated — and extremely successful — propaganda of self-aggrandisement.⁶ The most extreme statement of this view is that propounded by M. Rambaud, who finds almost limitless distortion of fact and sequence for the purpose of covering up military errors and loss.⁷ Other scholars have pointed out that the corollary of this view is difficult to draw: that there was an audience which both needed convincing of Caesar's portrayal of his *res gestae* and yet was not politically incapable of being convinced.⁸

² Plutarch, *Caesar* 3; Cicero, *Brutus* 316.

³ Cicero, *Brutus* 251-53; Quintilian, *Inst. Or.* X. 1, 114. In a letter to Caecilius Nepos, cited in Suetonius, *Iul.* 55, Cicero says of Caesar's oratory: *quis sententiis aut acutior aut crebrior? quis verbis aut ornatiores aut elegantiores?* This is a reminder that *elegantia* of the plain style does not preclude *ornatus* (cf. *Brutus* 197 of Scaevola: *tum ita breviter et presse et satis ornate et pereleganter diceret . . .*); *neglegentia diligens* is the virtue of the plain stylist at *Orat.* 78, after which he says specifically *unum aberit . . . ornatum illud*. *Ornatus* is generally associated with *copia*, another virtue generally denied the *genus humile*. But in this case, too, Cicero is not entirely consistent; and, in any case, when Cicero praises Caesar, he may be grovelling.

⁴ Cicero, *Brutus* 253: *verborum delectum originem esse eloquentiae*.

⁵ Hirtius, *Bellum Gallicum VIII*, praef. 4-7.

⁶ For the overview, see H. Oppermann's "Nachwort und bibliographische Nachträge" to Kraner, Dittenberger, Meusel, *C. Iulii Caesaris Commentarii De Bello Gallico* (Berlin 1975), pp. 469-77. It is interesting that before Rambaud stated his most extreme position (see below, note 7 and text), J. H. Collins, *Propaganda, Ethics, and Psychological Assumptions in Caesar's Writing* (diss. Frankfurt 1952), pp. 3-18, and C. E. Stevens, "The Bellum Gallicum as a Work of Propaganda," *Latomus* XI (1952), pp. 165-79, had already treated the question.

⁷ M. Rambaud, *La Déformation Historique chez César* (2nd ed., Paris 1966).

⁸ See most recently R. M. Ogilvie, *Roman Literature and Society* (Harmondsworth 1980), p. 65. The review of Rambaud by J. H. Collins in *Gnomon* XXVI (1954), pp. 527-33 is equally skeptical; by contrast, R. Bruère in his review (*Classical Philology* L [1955], pp. 142-46) shows himself more convinced.

Somewhat more recently other scholars have addressed the question of the genre of the Commentaries, their literary antecedents, and their relationship both to the "dispassionate," annalistic tradition (represented by Claudius Quadrigarius and Calpurnius Piso), on the one hand, and the more dramatically oriented historical style of Livy, on the other.⁹ One problem that confounds this investigation is that, though commentaries appear to have been produced by generals before Caesar, e.g., by Sulla, nothing of them exists for comparison.¹⁰ The assumption that a literary artist of the stature of Caesar would not have produced a work significantly different in style and form from less talented predecessors is weak on its face, yet necessary for a comparative study. Further, the fragments of the annalists, unless we reject one of the passages Gellius claims to preserve, do not unanimously support the assessment of a plain, dispassionate, unadorned style.¹¹

A more basic consideration than either of the above and, indeed, a prerequisite for both is a detailed and comprehensive study of the style of the Commentaries. Since the late nineteenth century, when it was discovered that in the Seventh Book of *De Bello Gallico* Caesar deviates palpably from some of the features that had previously been distinctive of his style, a development in his manner of writing has been taken for granted by those few scholars who have written on the Commentaries as literature.¹²

This observation has been used to support various arguments:

⁹ P. T. Eden, "Caesar's Style: Inheritance versus Intelligence," *Glotta* 40 (1962), pp. 74-117. Before Eden, the most extensive study was that of F. R. Boemer, "Der Commentarius. Zur Vorgeschichte und literarischen Form," *Hermes* 81 (1953), pp. 210-50. The subject had been opened by A. Klotz, *Caesarstudien* (Leipzig und Berlin 1910), ch. 1.

¹⁰ See Boemer, *op. cit.*, pp. 226-36.

¹¹ Gellius, *N.A.* IX. 11. 3-9 (cf. H. Peter, *Historicorum Romanorum Reliquiae* [Leipzig 1870] I, pp. 205-37). The attribution is rejected by J. Marouzeau, "Pour mieux Comprendre les Textes Latins," *Rev. de Philol.* 45 (1921), pp. 149-93; M. von Albrecht (below, note 14), p. 118, among others. The most powerful argument seems to be the principle of "one man, one style."

¹² G. Ihm, "Die stilistische Eigenart des VII Buches von Caesars Bellum Gallicum," *Philologus* Suppl. VI (1882-83), pp. 767 ff. Cf. Ihm, "Das VII Buch des Bellum Gallicum," *Berl. Philol. W.* (1886), pp. 1010-12; (1889), pp. 355-56. Two extensive studies of changes in Caesar's style have appeared in the last twenty years: D. Rasmussen, *Caesars Commentarii. Stil und Stilwandel am Beispiel der direkten Rede* (Göttingen 1963), for which see also the review by E. Mensching in *Helikon* 7 (1967), pp. 487-92; and F.-H. Mutschler, *Erzählstil und Propaganda in Caesars Kommentarien* (Heidelberg 1975), in which the categories selected to indicate development would have better responded to practical than statistical analysis.

The precision in the use of words, the *pura et illustris brevitās* which Cicero praises in Caesar's writings is a constant phenomenon. But as the commentaries proceed, they exhibit some differences of style. It has often been observed how the First Book of the *Gallic Wars* is more formal in a *commentarius* manner than the second, and after that the style becomes slightly more informal in the next four books. The Seventh Book has more movement still and, as it were, flows faster, and the same is true of the *Civil War*. The constructions and the run of the sentences become freer, and there are changes of a kind which suggests a change in habit rather than a reasoned change of preference in the search for the right word.¹³

Whether Sir Frank Adcock would further have elucidated these judgments had they not been offered primarily as an indication that Caesar did not write the *Gallic Wars* all at once, we cannot tell. As the criticism stands, it makes sense, I think, only to the converted. It is true to say that most investigations of Caesar's style are limited to vocabulary and verb position.¹⁴ That Adcock is satisfied to consider the first book, replete as it is with highly rhetorical, albeit indirect, speeches is an indication of the lack of specificity and definition in Caesarian criticism.¹⁵

P. T. Eden pointed to particular features which he labeled as distinguishing an older, "annalistic" tradition, such as *oratio obliqua*, artless repetition of phrases, excessive use of weak demonstratives—the need for which is obviated by the "comprehensive Livian period" (Eden's phrase)—and nearly uniform word-order and sentence structure.¹⁶ His point is that Caesar progressively, beginning with the last book of the *De Bello Gallico*, moved away from these features. Yet when, in the realm of composition he stresses a growing variety in the placement by Caesar of the verb, he continues to visualize an essentially simple sentence. That "comprehensive Livian period" is apparently considered to be beyond Caesar even in his developed, later style.

Eden's formula for the typical sentence in annalistic prose and in

¹³ Sir Frank Adcock, *Caesar as a Man of Letters* (Cambridge 1956), pp. 64-65.

¹⁴ The major exception is Michael von Albrecht's *Meister römischer Prosa von Cato bis Apuleius* (Heidelberg 1975), pp. 75-89. He deals with some of the same features studied in this paper. But, since he takes his examples from Book VII, he does not counter the common view of late stylistic development.

¹⁵ A practical analysis of the speeches that dominate Book I will show the carefully controlled rhetorical ornamentation and delicate *ethopoiia* that makes Book I perhaps the least typical part of the Caesarian corpus. Eden makes a start, *op. cit.*, pp. 107-08.

¹⁶ *Op. cit.*, pp. 79-80.

the great bulk of Caesar's corpus is: subject first or early, verb last.¹⁷ This coincides with the universally accepted notion of the typical Caesarian sentence, as articulated in histories of literature. Caesar, it is thought, wrote essentially simple sentences, perhaps achieving some temporal or causal subordination by use of a discrete ablative absolute. He ended his sentences with the verb. Adjectives and genitives would be expected adjacent to their governing nouns, and object phrases precede the prepositional phrases and other adverbial elements that adhere more closely to the verb. Such sentences do abound throughout the corpus of Caesar, but they are far from exhausting his sentence typologies.

There is a good deal of complexity and much intricacy of composition to be observed in the text of the *De Bello Gallico*, well in advance of the seventh book, where Eden makes the break and Adcock acknowledges a marked acceleration. What is needed for the study of style—and almost never afforded it—is close analysis of the text itself. I propose in what follows to touch upon three aspects of Caesar's style of which the readers of literary history would be little aware and which, illustrating my quotation from Bate, many readers of Caesar, guided by the *opinio recepta*, neither look for nor notice.

What does not follow, and eventually will in a more substantial exposition, is a full discussion of the relationship between the author's style and his motives. Obviously the Commentaries are a form of self-advertisement; what form of self-advertisement is less obvious. The fact that the style becomes more dramatic with the *De Bello Gallico*, rather than altering at the beginning of the *De Bello Civili*, might detract from the argument that Caesar wanted to present himself differently as conqueror of Gaul and as participant in the Civil War. Rambaud's book argues that Caesar was a consummate artist, employing devices of composition to obfuscate, alter, deceive, and aggrandize himself as a military genius by distorting facts. While it is important to observe and analyze the attitudes towards presentation of material in Caesar—Caesar's figures of thought—the artist's motives may have been quite different and less defensive than Rambaud suggests.

Rambaud's insistence on observing the text is, in any case, all to the good and has given rise to other works that approach the

¹⁷ *Op. cit.*, pp. 93-94, though he later acknowledges greater structural variety in Caesar, pp. 110-11.

Commentaries as a persuasive, self-consciously artistic genre.¹⁸ Even a plain stylist—as Caesar is usually characterized—composes with an end in view. Indeed, as Cicero indicates, the plain style is the most difficult to sustain.¹⁹ It may be that Caesar has succeeded all too well in disguising his art; that centuries of readers, praising him, predictably, for precisely those virtues Cicero assigned to him, have failed to notice his diversity, his deceptiveness, and his power. In saying this, I have anticipated my purpose. The first step is to find, through detailed analysis, components of Caesarian composition.

One of the first things one notices in a style of composition universally characterized as plain is the unusual position of words. It is expected that, in the absence of striving for special effects, adjectives and dependent genitives will accompany their nouns. That the ancients noticed deviations from that expectation is proved by the existence of the figure of speech called *hyperbaton*.²⁰ Merely to say that Caesar employed *hyperbaton*, however, would not be sufficient to suspect him of a style more ornate than plain. Figures of speech are no more valuable as comprehensive labels to describe style than broader critical terminology. The artist's use of the figure needs to be examined. *Hyperbaton* is found in all authors, even the earliest Latin prose authors, and in their most prosaic texts.²¹ Variations from normal usage, or usage for obvious effect, become part of the author's self-conscious artistry. Even in so familiar and apparently unremarkable a usage as the insertion of a postpositive between the *praenomen* and *nomen* of a Roman name, Cicero's practice varied. It has been discovered that, while Cicero uses such formulations in speeches to the Senate and *ad iudices*, they are unexampled in the popular speeches.²²

¹⁸ E.g. W. Richter, *Caesar als Darsteller seiner Taten* (Heidelberg 1977), esp. pp. 141-51; G. Pascucci, "Interpretazione linguistica e stilistica del Cesare autentico," *Aufstieg und Niedergang der römischen Welt* I. 3 (Berlin 1973), pp. 488-522. This is not to imply that good work on style had to wait for Rambaudo; see T. Feller, *Caesars Kommentieren über den Gallischen Krieg und die kunstmässige Geschichtsschreibung* (Leipzig 1929).

¹⁹ See Cicero's discussion at *Orator* 75-91, but for the polemical slant, see also below, note 42.

²⁰ See H. Lausberg, *Handbuch der literarischen Rhetorik* (Munich 1973), pp. 357-59. The best study of the figure is by A. W. Ahlberg: "De traiectionis figura ab antiquissimis prosae scriptoribus latinis adhibita," *Eranos* XI (1911), pp. 88-106.

²¹ See Ahlberg, *op. cit.*, p. 88.

²² I owe this to Mr. George Panayiotou, whose forthcoming dissertation on the stylistic variations in Ciceronian speeches addressed to different classes of audience is a storehouse of independently discovered, exhaustively documented features of Cicero's style.

In the following examples the separation of the adjective from the noun creates the expectation of the noun, emphasizes the adjective, and brackets the phrase:

summi ut sint laboris . . . (B.G. IV.2)

—of German oxen; the double displacement makes the phrase striking. If we could be sure that Caesar was merely trying to avoid alliteration, we would have a valuable piece of stylistic knowledge.

qua minime arduus ad nostras munitiones ascensus videbatur . . . (B.G. II. 33)

Here, as elsewhere in Caesar and other prose authors, the bracketing of "adjective . . . noun" allows for the inclusion of adverbial material not otherwise expected to modify a noun.

So, too,

brevissimus in Britanniam traiectus. (B.G. IV. 21)

In both these examples the verbal noun tolerates adverbial material, so that the effect of the phrasing is to gain compactness. Similarly,

sibi nullam cum iis amicitiam esse posse . . . (B.G. IV.8)

where **nullam amicitiam cum iis sibi esse posse* would mean something rather different.

The delay through separation of a partitive genitive from a governing neuter pronoun may be a feature of unself-conscious Latin, found as early as in the Elder Cato's *De Agricultura*.²³ Yet, in:

quantum iam apud eos hostes uno proelio auctoritatis essent consecuti sentiebat. (B.G. IV. 13)

the length of the separation is less striking than the advantage Caesar takes of the separation to stress the inserted *uno proelio*.

I have not noticed the same propensity to separate adjectives (even indefinites) from their governing nouns as partitives from their governing words in early Latin, yet the next example may be in articulation not very different from the last:

ne quam noctu oppidani a militibus iniuriam acciperent. (B.G. II. 33)

To understand the word-order, though, it is necessary to quote the initial main clause:

sub vesperum Caesar portas claudi militesque ex oppido exire iussit,

²³ See Ahlberg, *op. cit.*, p. 89.

It is normal for *ne quam* to appear together: *noctu*, following from *sub vesperum*, comes next, and Caesar inserts a *militibus* into the object phrase to create the collocation of *oppidani* and a *militibus*. Those critics who praise Caesar's minimal vocabulary may well point to a sentence like this one for repeated words and lexical stems. Much more is at work here, as Caesar details his attention to details.

The articulation:

quam quisque ab opere in partem casu devenit . . . (B.G. II. 21)

occasioned, partly perhaps, by the desire to separate *ab opere* from *casu* and to create an, albeit zeugmatic, anaphoric parallelism of *quam* . . . *quaeque* . . . *ad haec*, is also best considered in the development of the whole section.²⁴ It is the third reference to the *partes* of the Roman position.

Caesar . . . ad cohortandos milites, quam in partem fors obtulit, decurrit et ad legionem decimam devenit. [An exhortation in *oratio obliqua* follows.] atque in alteram partem item cohortandi causa profectus pugnantis occurrit. [A dramatic statement of the paucity of time for organization follows.] quam quisque ab opere in partem casu devenit quaeque prima signa conspexit, ad haec constitit . . .

The collocation of *ab opere* and *in partem* reinforces the sense of *casu* and the randomness of the formation. Exigencies of time and the enthusiasm of the enemy make any further attempt at organization impossible.

Although the battle with the Nervii is frequently accorded special attention and praise for the artistry of Caesar's dramatic presentation, critics claiming the slow development of the author's style do not come to terms with a substantial section of highly ornamental and contrived prose coming so early in the corpus (B.G. II. 16-27).²⁵ The propensity to find only what one expects to find in the style of Caesar has occasioned the excision of the highly formal tricolon with which the passage ends.²⁶ A locution like the following is left undiscussed, probably because its peculiarity is unnoticed:

temporis tanta fuit exiguitas hostiumque tam paratus ad dimicandum animus . . . (B.G. II. 21)

²⁴ I have noticed that the anticipation of the antecedent by the relative clause is found in Caesar only in highly rhetorical passages, almost exclusively in speeches in *oratio obliqua*.

²⁵ E. Norden, *Antike Kunstprosa* (repr. Darmstadt 1958), p. 219, singles out B.G. II. 27 for special praise, without mentioning the uniqueness of the composition.

²⁶ By Gruppe, followed by Meusel and Fuchs; see Seel's app. crit. *ad loc.*

Temporis, as Rambaud points out,²⁷ is the effective word and deserves its place at the beginning of the sentence in asyndeton. But that does not explain the *hyperbaton* (cf. *temporis exiguitas postulabat* at *B.G.* II. 33), still less the more extreme parallel *hyperbaton* of *hostium . . . animus*. In each case the genitive raises the expectation of the governing noun, in which the drama lies. The parallelism is artificial and artistic.

Hyperbaton figures in the Caesarian ablative absolute. For the Tullio-centric student of Latin, the ablative absolute is a compendious construction composed of a participle and noun, perhaps with a brief modifier inserted. Such short phrases are to be found in Caesar as well, but Caesar will also use the ablative absolute to govern more extensive phrases like gerundives or even dependent clauses. They represent a very different attitude towards the construction between those authors, one in which Livy is more closely allied with Caesar than Cicero. Although in both Cicero and Caesar the ablative absolute introduces and disposes of material (generally) in anticipation of the main predicate, Cicero appears to have found complex structures within the ablative absolute too weighted and compact. He prefers to dispose of subordinate material more evenly over the structure of the main predicate. Not so with Caesar.

saepibusque densissimis, ut ante demonstravimus, interiectis . . . (*B.G.* II. 22)

iis impedimentis, quae secum agere ac portare non poterant, citra flumen Rhenum depositis . . . (*B.G.* II. 29)

Sometimes the dependent element is too complicated or long for inclusion within the ablative absolute complex:

celeriter ut ante Caesar imperaverat ignibus significatione facta . . . (*B.G.* II. 33)

cuius adventu spe inlata militibus ac redintegrato animo, cum pro se quisque in conspectu imperatoris etiam extremis suis rebus operam navare cuperet . . . (*B.G.* II. 25)

The whole psychological motivation for the predicate of the sentence is given in a highly involved locution before the brief, but emphatic main clause expressed, significantly, in the passive:

. . . paulum hostium impetus tardatus est.

The kind of imbalance between the ablative absolute phrase and the

²⁷ M. Rambaud, *De Bello Gallico Secundus Tertiusque Libri* (Paris 1965), *ad loc.*

main clause is not limited, for the early books, to the battle with the Nervii:

eorum satisfactione accepta et itinere exquisito per Diviciacum, quod e Gallis ei maximam fidem habebat, ut milium amplius quinquaginta circuitu locis apertis exercitum duceret, de quarta vigilia, ut dixerat, profectus est. (B.G. I. 41)

Caesar has just finished a long passage describing how he brought under control a wave of irrational panic in the Roman camp. Having dealt successfully with that problem, he is ready to move. The detail of the reconnoitered marching plan appears too important to leave out (Caesar leaves nothing to chance), but he does not want it to slow up the narrative (in the predicate) unduly.

He uses a similar structure to describe the deceit of the Atuatuca. Here, three ablative absolute constructions mark the progress of the action, leading up to a brief statement of fact.

armorum magna multitudine de muro in fossam
 quae erat ante oppidum
 iacta,
 sicut prope summam muri aggerisque altitudinem acervi armorum
 adaequarent,
 et tamen circiter parte tertia,
 ut postea perspectum est,
 celata atque in oppido retenta,
 portis patefactis
 eo die pace sunt usi. (B.G. II.32)

The first two structures are explicitly balanced in antithesis (*et tamen*) before the compendious *portis patefactis* following the execution of the plan. The main clause, conspicuously terse, is sardonic.

From the above examples it is clear that Caesar did not limit himself to the simple sentence, verb last, with which he is associated. He often includes a substantial amount of subordinate material within the compass of a single syntactic unit. To this extent, he is, by definition, periodic in his composition. With the need, perhaps, for a more basic adherence to narrative sequence, Caesar does not generally achieve a smooth distribution of clauses and phrases over the sentence in the Ciceronian manner;²⁸ though such sentences can be found:

{ipse (equo vulnerato) deiectus} {(quoad potuit) fortissime restitit.}
 (B.G. IV. 12)

²⁸ See H. C. Gotoff, *Cicero's Elegant Style* (Urbana 1979), p. 67 and *passim*.

The function served by the participle in the ablative absolute of governing further subordinate elements is shared by other participial phrases in substantial, i.e., subordinating phrases. Again, by making participial phrases major structures for controlling dependent syntactic material, Caesar generally ends up with a predicate construction that is shorter than Cicero's and with less distribution of weighted clausal material over the predicate. Caesar's use of the participial phrase to carry a variety of subordinate constructions again allies him more closely with Livy.

In Cicero the participle sometimes governs a complementary clause; in Caesar, it may govern any subordinate element, complementary, adjectival, or adverbial.²⁹

quos sibi Caesar oblatos gavisus . . . (B.G. IV.13)

is a construction that might occur in Cicero.

pollicitus hortatusque, ut in ea sententia permanerent . . . (B.G. IV.21)

is less likely. The following exemplify a technique for subordinating elements in a sentence that is favored by Caesar, but foreign to Cicero.

Caesar questus quod, cum ultro in continentem legatis missis pacem ab se petissent, bellum sine causa intulissent, ignoscere imprudentiae dixit . . . (B.G. IV. 27)

The *quod*-clause is complementary to (and, in a sense, explanatory of) *questus*; it governs an adverbial clause. Caesar gives full value to the deceit before subordinating the whole circumstance to his response. *Imprudentiae* echoes an earlier *propter imprudentiam ut ignosceretur petiverunt*. The articulation makes clear what Caesar thought of their excuse of *imprudentia*.

Caesar etsi . . . fore videbat, ut . . . periculum effugerent, tamen nactus equites circiter xxx, quos Commius Atrebas, de quo ante dictum est, secum transportaverat, legiones in acie pro castris constituit. (B.G. IV. 35)

quos [hostes] tanto spatio secuti, quantum cursu et viribus efficere potuerunt, complures ex iis occiderunt.³⁰ (B.G. IV. 35)

²⁹ See Eric Laughton, *The Participle in Cicero* (Oxford 1964), pp. 29-30.

³⁰ On *ex iis*, see, first P. Hellwig, *Über den Pleonasmus bei Caesar* (diss. Berlin 1889), esp. p. 7. This feature, not to be confused with the device mentioned above, note 24, is universally noticed. Von Albrecht, *op. cit.*, p. 83 suggests attractively, but not, perhaps, convincingly, that it is a conscious element of a functional style.

In the first and third examples, the participial phrase begins the period and structures all the material, leaving a brief and emphatic main clause. That this procedure is not invariable can be seen in the middle sentence, in which the period is composed of an adversative condition before the main clause which is introduced by the participial phrase. Within the main clause, then, all the subordinate material is subsumed under *nactus*—a relative clause modifying the subject of another relative clause—before the simple statement of Caesar's action.

Frequently, the material—even of extensive participial phrases—is arranged with no special attention to effect beyond logical sequence. At other times, the structure can become quite imposing:

hoc sibi Caesar satis opportune accidisse arbitratus,

quod neque post tergum hostem relinquere volebat

neque belli gerendi propter anni tempus facultatem habebat

neque has tantularum rerum occupationes Britanniae anteponendas iudicabat,

magnum iis numerum obsidum imperat. (*B.G.* IV. 22)

Each reason is given full weight in the *quod*-clause; the anaphora of *neque* is felt as is the *hyperbaton* of *belli gerendi facultatem*. This orderly syntactic composition represents the progression of thought that led Caesar to his decision to accept the representations of the Morini.³¹

In spite of the obvious differences between his composition and that of Cicero, it is clear that the so-called plain stylist of the Commentaries shares some essential literary techniques with the orator and essayist. The above sentence, like so many complex sentences in Caesar, is perfectly periodic. The main concession that must be made, to this point, is that the participial phrase in Caesar should be acknowledged as a major subordinating element. A rather dramatic example of this usage follows, in which the participle *parati* governs a preceding *ut*-clause, which in turn governs a preceding conditional clause.

³¹ It is instructive to cite the translation of J. Warrington who treats the implications of a (logically) non-parallel relationship of the propositions in the *quod*-clauses: "for although I had no wish to leave an enemy hanging at my back, the season was too advanced to start another campaign; and, in any case, the British campaign was clearly more important than the conquest of these petty states," *Caesar's War Commentaries* (London 1965), p. 65.

nostri autem, si ab illis initium transeundi fieret, ut impeditos adgred-
erentur, parati in armis erant.³² (B.G. II. 9)

Weighted participial phrases playing against a brief emphatic main clause is just one kind of complex Caesarian sentence. He is capable of setting out formally balanced periods.

ita uno tempore

et longas naves,

quibus Caesar exercitum transportandum curaverat

quasque in aridum subduxerat,

aestus complebat,

et onerarias

quae ad ancoras erant deligatae,

tempestas adflictabat.

neque ulla nostris facultas aut administrandi

aut auxiliandi dabatur. (B.G. IV. 29)

The anticipatory *et* begins the almost symmetrical structure *et longas naves* + relative + governing verb // *onerarias* (sc. *naves*) + relative clause + verb, forcing the reader to *adflictabat*. The relationship of the next clause to this carefully constructed parallel unit introduces a complex question of Caesar's rhetoric. The very break after the parallelism suggests a separation, though the description of the effects of the storm on the fleet provides the reason (and excuse) for Caesar's inability to act. It is the syntactic independence of the last clause that stresses the reason, while giving the excuse.

Allobrogibus se

vel persuasuros

quod nondum bono animo in p.R. viderentur

existimabant

vel vi coacturos

ut per suos fines eos ire paterentur. (B.G. I.6)

The parallel future infinitives are in syntactic balance unexceptional for cases in which others or Caesar himself treats balanced alternatives. The anticipatory *vel* sets up and insists upon the balance in a way not unusual for Caesar.³³ The placement of the main verb, however,

³² *Parati* is participial; *parati in armis erant* corresponds antithetically with the intransitive predicate of the previous sentence: *hanc si nostri transirent, hostes expectabant*.

³³ See K. Lorenz, *Über Anaphora und Chiasmus in Caesars Bellum Gallicum* (diss. Creuzburg 1875), pp. 2-4. The fact that he does not add examples of *vel . . . vel* to those of *aut* and *sive* is not material.

between the clauses, with periodicity guaranteed beyond the verb by anticipatory *vel*, marks a kind of stylistic decision not generally associated with Caesar. In view of the opinion that Caesar's style developed and became more embellished towards the end of *De Bello Gallico*, it is significant that this example occurs early in the first book.

The style of any prose writer's composition is first determined by his decision as to how much subordinate material to include within a period. Next, the distribution of that material becomes the issue. Caesar is capable of a large amount of variety in both areas. As the examples are collected and analyzed, then considered in terms of their context, Caesar's stylistic choices will take on more meaning.

reliquum exercitum Q. Titurio Sabino et L. Aurunculeio Cottae legatis
in Menapios atque in eos pagos Morinorum,
a quibus ad eum legati non venerant,
ducendum dedit;

P. Sulpicium Rufum legatum cum eo praesidio
quod satis esse arbitrabatur,
portum tenere iussit. (B.G. IV. 22)

This has overtones of what has been suggested to be an official style for military reports: object first, verb last, asyndeton.³⁴ Certainly, whether reporting his actions to the Senate or to his readers, such sentences seem straightforward and uncomplicated. On the other hand, there are elements of similarity and deliberate variation that can hardly be casual. The early mention of the people to whom the authority is delegated (*legatis* // *legatum*), the relative clauses, and especially the anticipation of each relative by a demonstrative adjective modifying the antecedent, all speak for careful attention to parallelism. On the other hand, Caesar chooses two different constructions to express his commands (*exercitum ducendum dedit* // *portum tenere iussit*), resulting in the legates appearing in different cases.

These lines come at the end of a passage in which Caesar has been describing his extensive preparations for his first British expedition and provide, in their suggestion of repeated sentence rhythm, a conclusion to those controlled and well thought-out preparations. The next sentence begins with the words: *his constitutis rebus*.

Not only does a practical criticism of Caesar's composition dem-

³⁴ See H. Fränkel, "Über philologische Interpretation am Beispiel von Caesars gallischen Krieg," *Neue Jahrbücher für Wissenschaft und Jugendbildung* 9 (1933), pp. 26-41 = *Wege und Formen Frühgriechischen Denkens* (Munich 1955), pp. 294-312; and E. Fraenkel, "Eine Form Römischer Kriegsbuletin," *Eranos* LIV (1956), pp. 189-94 = *Kleine Beiträge zur klassischen Philologie* (Rome 1964), pp. 69-73.

onstrate a variety of sentence typologies, but it makes clear that Caesar composed beyond the limit of a single sentence, no matter how complex. How this texturing through kinds of composition is brought into play in extended passages remains to be investigated in detail. It is patently an issue in one of the most frequently cited passages in the *De Bello Gallico*, II. 27.³⁵ The encomium to those who fought on both sides in the battle of the Scambre is so obviously ornamental that the final balance has been suspected and even rejected by some editors.³⁶ This is indicative of the attitude that has been taken towards the artistry of Caesar. What offends the preconception is treated with suspicion and by some removed.³⁷ Scholars who cannot convince themselves to take this extreme position countenance such passages without ever stating that the question of Caesar's style is more complex than the *communis opinio* suggests.

The battle with the Nervii is a dramatic set piece in the *De Bello Gallico*, marking far earlier than usually acknowledged a departure from the so-called *commentarius* style. The entire passage deserves the detailed analysis of practical criticism.³⁸ What follows is the summation, after the Romans, buoyed by the arrival of Caesar and Labienus, have turned the tide of battle:

horum adventu tanta rerum commutatio est facta,

ut nostri, etiam qui vulneribus confecti procubuissent,

scutis innixi proelium redintegrarent,

calones perterritos hostes conspicati etiam inermes armatis occurrerent,

equites vero, ut turpitudinem fugae virtute delerent,

³⁵ See above, note 25, and the more detailed studies by H. P. Kohns-Andernach, "Der Verlauf der Nervierschlacht," *Gymnasium* 76 (1969), pp. 1-17 and G. Pascucci, "I Mezzi Espressivi e Stilistici di Cesare nel Processo di Deformazione Storica dei Commentari," *Stud. Class. e Orientali* 6 (1956), pp. 137-74. Both proceed from the discussion of the passage in H. Oppermann, *Caesar, der Schriftsteller und sein Werk* (Leipzig 1933), esp. pp. 55-64, but he treats the passage *passim*. C. Neumeister, *Grundsätze der Forensischen Rhetorik* (Munich 1964), pp. 168-69, in comparing Cicero and Caesar, sets out II. 25 in linear form to demonstrate phraseology. But he omits certain phrases and draws no specific conclusions as to Caesar's composition.

³⁶ See above, note 26. O. Seel, *C. Iulius Caesar I, Bellum Gallicum* (Stuttgart 1961), *app. crit. ad loc.*: "stylus utcumque durus," but the full note is very much to the point.

³⁷ *Quamvis* at B.G. IV. 2 has exercised scholars because its use there is unique. The equally unique and more surprising *aequo Marte* at VII. 19 is ignored by critics (H. Merguet, *Lexikon zu den Schriften Cäsars* [Jena 1886] has no entry for *Mars* in his otherwise most useful and scholarly work).

³⁸ The dramatic qualities noticed by Pascucci (above, note 35) and others should be analyzed in association with word-order, structure, and other stylistic devices Caesar lavishes on this piece. I depart from Seel's *pugnantes studio* to read *pugnae β*.

omnibus in locis pugnae se legionariis militibus praeferrent.

at hostes etiam in extrema spe salutis tantam virtutem praestiterunt

ut cum primi eorum cecidissent,

proximi iacentibus insisterent atque ex eorum corporibus pugnarent,

his deiectis et coacervatis cadaveribus

qui superessent ut ex tumulo tela in nostros coicerent

pilaque intercepta remitterent.

ut non nequiquam tantae virtutis homines iudicari deberet

ausos esse transire latissimum flumen,

ascendere altissimas ripas,

subire iniquissimum locum:

quae facilia ex difficillimis animi magnitudo redegerat. (B.G. II. 27)

The Roman forces are divided into three groups: wounded soldiers, non-combatants, and cavalry. Each is at the head of a complex syntactic unit, each needing to overcome a defect or disability. Balanced participial phrases (*vulneribus confecti* // *scutis innixi*) recreate the struggle of their transformation from incapacitated wounded to revived fighters. Previously frightened off themselves, the non-combatants, seeing the enemy in a panic, venture to attack an armed force, though themselves unarmed. The *perterritos* is momentarily ambiguous, but the collocation of *inermes armatis* puts the change of heart in sharp perspective. The equites, who have been guilty of manifest cowardice under attack, must overcome their strong sense of shame; that motivating force is expressed fully in the purpose clause (just as *vero* singles out their special problem in effecting a recovery), before their ubiquitous valor in battle is described. The audience is expected not to forget the impetus that motivates all three changes: *horum adventu* at the head of the sentence. Each member of the tricolon is itself both complex and perfectly rounded.

With *at* Caesar shifts to the enemy. The sentence describing the heroism of the Nervii is in clear balance, though *nostri* and *hostes* are not in parallel constructions. *Tantum . . . ut* echoes *tanta . . . ut* above; the magnitude in this passage is of virtue. As with the Roman forces, the enemy fighters are divided, for more obviously rhetorical reasons, into three groups: *primi*, *proximi*, and *qui superessent*—although the parallelism is patently not sustained—as wave after wave of Nervii sacrifice themselves bravely and functionally in a losing cause. The first two are combined in the *ut*-clause that characterizes their valor. The first to be slaughtered are subsumed in a *cum*-clause that interrupts *ut . . . proximi*. It is as if the narrator, forced by the rapidity of the action, looks past the first wave to the second. Now the narrator

switches to the third group, again referring to the previous one in a more subordinate construction; he insists on continuity. Meusel,³⁹ with no punctuation after *cadaveribus*, may be right in taking the participial phrase as dative and, therefore, clearly dependent on *superessent*, describing the situation vividly with the simile *ut ex tumulo* (cf. *ex eorum corporibus*). There is a tremendous sense of unceasing, relentless repetition, of inexorable determination on the part of the Nervii to fight to the last man. The total description is cumulative and capacious: capacious in the doubling of verbs and participles, for the constructions are tightly packed. The gesture of the Nervii may have been futile, but like the charge of the Light Brigade, it is the stuff of which military legend is made (while reflecting no discredit on the victorious general). Caesar can afford to reflect with admiration on such a sacrifice.

The summation comes, without rhetorical preparation, in a second *ut*-clause appended to the second period.⁴⁰ It is as formal as Caesar gets in the Commentaries.⁴¹ The parallelism is so symmetrical as to have caused suspicion and to be criticized by one scholar who tolerates it. The object of each infinitive in the tricolon is modified by a superlative adjective; the word-order is unvaried. In sharp contrast to the detail and complexity of what has preceded, the generalizing last clause, with its simple but effective play on *facilia* / / *difficillimis*, is a rhetorical as well as a structural decrescendo.

It would be previous to try to generalize from the above examples to a full and comprehensive statement about the style of Caesar even in the *De Bello Gallico* alone. Changes and developments of technique require a more detailed look at the context, intention, and place in the corpus. From the use and position of words to sentence typologies, patterns of preference will be observed displaying more idiosyncrasy than Caesar has ever been credited with. Close reading will permit, as in the above cases, some correlations to be discovered between

³⁹ F. Kraner, W. Dittenberger, H. Meusel, *C. Iulii Caesaris Commentarii de Bello Gallico* (Berlin 1972), *ad loc.*

⁴⁰ The second *ut*-clause is not co-ordinate with the first. See Meusel, *op. cit.*, *ad loc.*

⁴¹ One clear observation deriving from a close study of the text is that Caesar is more varied, less economical than is generally supposed; cf. Eden, *op. cit.*, p. 86, on one thought, one expression. The closest parallels I have found are these: VII. 19: *ut, qui propinquitatem loci videret, paratos prope aequo Marte ad dimicandum existimaret, qui iniquitatem condicionis perspiceret, inani simulatione sese ostentare cognosceret*; VII. 28: *labore operis incitati NON aetate confectis, NON mulieribus, NON infantibus pepercerunt*, but they are not conspicuously similar. They are, however, more formally balanced or anaphoric than anything else besides *B.G.* II. 27.

techniques of composition and desired effects. This is what I mean by practical criticism; it will be especially fruitful when applied to an author whose style is more admired through perfunctory labelling than close reading. Suffice it for now to say that if Caesar is still to be identified with the *genus humile*, that level of style must be expanded beyond the limitations imposed by, say, Cicero to include a composition that can be periodic, complex, and capable of great expressiveness through the use of varied and often subtle techniques.⁴²

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⁴² See H. C. Gotoff, *op. cit.*, pp. 27-31, on possible deception and disingenuity in Cicero's treatment of the *genus humile*. The model of the *tria genera dicendi* has its virtues for critical as well as polemical reasons, but in no case will the application of a label substitute for practical analysis and accurate definition of the stylistic features Caesar employs.